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Report of UNDP on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit in 2008

Summary

In line with General Assembly resolution A/RES/59/267, which was reiterated in A/RES/62/246, the present report provides a synopsis of management responses to the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and also draws attention to specific recommendations directed at the legislative organs of United Nations system organizations. Of the six reports issued by JIU in 2008, one relates specifically to another United Nations organization and therefore, is not relevant to the Executive Board. Management responses to the recommendations contained in the remaining five JIU reports pertinent to UNDP are provided, and also include a review of the implementation status of recommendations contained in 2007 and 2006 JIU reports. In line with Executive Board wishes as well as the current emphasis by the United Nations on simplification and harmonization, the presentation of the report is harmonized with UNFPA but included as separate annexes with its own management responses in the annual report of the respective executive heads of the organization.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to take note of the present report, particularly those aspects of the JIU reports that have relevance to the work of UNDP.

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I. Overview of Joint Inspection Unit reports issued in 2008

1. As reaffirmed by General Assembly resolution (A/RES/62/226), the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) is the only system-wide external oversight body. In accordance with A/RES/62/246, this report provides a summary of UNDP management responses to relevant recommendations contained in the reports issued by JIU in 2008 and draws attention to recommendations that are intended for use by the UNDP Executive Board. For a listing of JIU reports and details of recommendations, refer to the JIU website (http://www.unjiu.org/en/reports.htm).

2. Of the six reports issued by JIU in 2008, five reports have direct relevance to UNDP. These are: (a) a review of the junior professional officer/associate expert/associate professional officer programmes (JIU/REP/2008/2); (b) a management review of the environmental governance within United Nations systems (JIU/REP/2008/3); (c) a review of national execution of technical cooperation projects (JIU/REP/2008/4); (d) a review of information and communication technology hosting services in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2008/5); and (e) a review of management of Internet websites in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2008/6). At the time of this report, not one of the five remaining reports issued by JIU in 2008 has been deliberated at the Chief Executives Board or the High Level Committee on Management (HLCM); a consolidated United Nations response to the General Assembly has yet to be issued.

II. Synopsis and review of relevant Joint Inspection Unit reports and recommendations in 2008

3. The management responses to the recommendations contained in the five relevant JIU reports are provided below. See annex 1 for a statistical summary of 2008 JIU reports, and annex 2 for a review of relevant JIU recommendations for consideration by the Executive Board.

A. Junior professional officer/associate expert/associate professional officer programmes (JIU/REP/2008/2)

4. This report provides an assessment of the current situation, the legislative basis, related rules and regulations, as well as the effectiveness and impact of the junior professional officer/associate expert/associate professional officer programmes in the United Nations system organizations. Of the nine recommendations, three are directed at the Economic and Social Council and another two are for Chief Executives Board attention. The four remaining recommendations have direct relevance to the UNDP Junior Professional Officer Service Centre in Copenhagen.

5. All four applicable JIU recommendations have been implemented or are being pursued on an ongoing basis, including: (a) deliberate management priorities articulated in the UNDP People-Centred Strategy for Managing Human Resources (2008–2011) to use differing categories of staff, including

junior professional officers, as one of the candidate pools for succession management and career development; (b) a clear mandate and corporate resources to support service centre operations; (c) implementation of client satisfaction surveys and periodic evaluation and monitoring; and (d) follow-up, *inter alia*, from the biennial National Recruitment Services meetings.

6. The junior professional officer programme not only represents an excellent potential source of experts for development cooperation, it can be considered an important talent pool for succession planning and career development in UNDP. Former junior professional officers represent more than 20 per cent of the current UNDP professional-level staff, and one out of three United Nations resident coordinators are former junior professional officers.

7. The UNDP Junior Professional Officer Service Centre in Copenhagen has been recognized in JIU reports for many positive attributes, including: being an efficiently run self-financing unit (paragraph 124); for its wide and systematic conduct of client satisfaction surveys (paragraph 99); for its high level of computerization in delivering services, which includes the innovative trial of 'Skype' (voice over internet protocol) in the field; and the implementation of an electronic file management system (paragraph 125).

B. Management review of the environmental governance within United Nations systems (JIU/REP/2008/3)

8. This report reviews and provides system wide recommendations for increasing the contributions of the United Nations system towards a more integrated approach to international environmental governance and management at the national, regional and international levels. There are 12 recommendations requiring further consideration by the General Assembly and/or the Secretary-General, in consultation with multilateral environmental agreements. Of the 12 JIU recommendations, two were deemed relevant for action by UNDP. These include: (a) the establishment of guidelines for national, or where appropriate, regional platforms for environmental protection and sustainable development policies; and (b) the development of a joint system-wide planning framework for management and coordination of environmental activities.

9. UNDP agrees with the need to set up regional or national platforms that can facilitate the integration of environmental protection and sustainable development policies, including implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, into common country assessment and United Nations Development Assistant Framework processes based on individual government priorities. Such platforms should, however, be set up within the 'One United Nations'/resident coordinator system through a process that ensures ownership and buy-in from key parts of the United Nations system. System-wide budgetary support for its implementation remains another key element to be fully addressed. UNDP also supports calls for development of an inclusive, joint, system-wide planning framework and believes that policy orientation and a strategy would be necessary prerequisites for developing a results-based planning framework.

10. UNDP welcomes the revival of the ministerial discussion on international environmental governance decided at the 25th session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme. UNDP believes that ownership in all parts of the system – at international as well as national levels – is an important prerequisite for enhancing coherence.

C. National execution of technical cooperation projects in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2008/4)

11. This report reviews the evolution of national execution, identifies best practices, and identifies lessons learned in the national execution of technical cooperation projects in the United Nations system organizations. UNDP supports the call by JIU for greater system-wide coherence and continuing efforts in the harmonization and simplification of rules and procedures in programming activities as a way to further strengthen national capacity. Of the 11 recommendations, four are directed at the General Assembly and/or the Chief Executives Board, while two are directed to the legislative bodies of respective United Nations organizations.

12. Five recommendations relevant to UNDP have been implemented or are being pursued on an ongoing basis. These include an update of the programming policy and guidelines for nationally-executed projects, which underscores the importance of national ownership of programmatic interventions and the need for enhanced support for system-wide coherence and coordination to developing countries in response to the triennial comprehensive policy review (A/RES/62/208). Other important joint efforts with United Nations development organizations include: harmonization of financial regulations and rules between UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund, UNFPA, the World Food Programme, and the United Nations; continued implementation of the harmonized approach to cash transfers as a risk management tool and as a way to reduce transaction costs related to the country programmes of ExCom organizations; the development of a common framework for auditing United Nations system coordinated programmes supported by multiple organizations, which was endorsed by the United Nations Development Group in 2008; and the revision of UNDP and UNFPA financial rules and regulations to facilitate participation in direct budget support and other pooled funding arrangements at the country level, which was approved the Executive Board during its September 2008 session.

13. Other pertinent JIU recommendations suggest that legislative bodies of respective United Nations system organizations: (a) assist recipient governments by reiterating that donors provide less conditioned extra budgetary contributions with a view to realizing the priorities of recipient countries; and (b) assist in strengthening national implementation capacities in the area of audit and finance through focused training. While the recommendation for less conditioned, 'other' budgetary contributions is desirable, donors decide on target areas and/or geographical distribution in accordance with their own mandate. UNDP will, in the context of institutional development, support national capacity development in procurement, financial management, and operational management based on national demand and in line with the triennial comprehensive policy review.

D. Review of information and communication technology hosting services in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2008/5)

14. This report provides a comparative study of main information and communication technology hosting services and best practices in the United Nations system organizations.

15. All six JIU recommendations have been implemented or are being pursued on an ongoing basis at UNDP. These include the establishment of an information and communication technology governance structure comprising a corporate information and communication technology board chaired by an Assistant Secretary-General. The information and communication technology board comprises key 'business and technical' stakeholders in UNDP and is primarily responsible for reviewing the justification and cost/benefit of information and communication technology project proposals (including hosting arrangements) to ensure contribution to the mandate and strategic direction of the organization. UNDP has also established a joint information and communication technology governance structure with UNFPA, the United Nations Office for Project Services, and the United Nations Volunteers for joint procurement and roll out of its common enterprise resource planning system and information and communication technology hosting services. The JIU cited this as a best practice in implementing a common information and communication technology system based on mutually acceptable cost recovery mechanisms built on transparency and accountability.

E. Review of management of Internet websites in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2008/6)

16. This report reviews current practices in the management of Internet websites in the United Nations system organization as a communication tool for information dissemination.

17. All seven JIU recommendations have been implemented or are being pursued on an ongoing basis at UNDP. These include clear and specific guidelines to UNDP country and corporate offices on standards required for web layout/design, branding, editorial controls, and web accessibility and multilingualism requirements. These guidelines are captured in the UNDP Communication Toolkit, which also provides guidance on interacting with members of the media and the public. UNDP has also initiated plans to migrate to a new content management system that supports Latin script, non-Latin script, and bi-directional script as part of a larger integrated strategy for a UNDP enterprise content and collaboration architecture. Currently, the quality and timeliness of country office websites are performance indicators in the 'balanced score card' of UNDP country offices.

18. Two specific JIU recommendations are pertinent to legislative bodies of respective United Nations system organizations: (a) to establish an ad-hoc committee responsible for the implementation of multilingualism on corporate websites; and (b) to require heads of organizations to report on

recommendations contained in this report. UNDP has already instituted a multilingual policy for its corporate web presence and for online publication of all prescriptive content in English, French, and Spanish. In addition, UNDP country office websites are to be available in either English or French and in the local language. UNDP has already established an information and communication technology governance structure – its corporate information and communication technology board – chaired by an Assistant Secretary-General and comprised of key UNDP 'business and technical' stakeholders, which reviews all information and communication technology initiatives to ensure coherence/alignment with the goals and strategic direction of UNDP.

III. Status of UNDP implementation of Joint Inspection Unit recommendations in 2006-2007

19. In accordance with General Assembly resolution A/RES/62/246, Annex 3 and Annex 4 provide an update of the implementation status of JIU recommendations in 2006 and 2007, respectively.

20. Of the 35 relevant recommendations issued in 2007, UNDP has implemented 68 per cent. Of the 27 relevant recommendations issued in 2006, UNDP has implemented 88 per cent of the recommendations. Many JIU recommendations have system-wide impact and ramifications; UNDP is committed to working and contributing to discussions and deliberations at the various forums in the future.

Annex 1: Summary of reports issued by the Joint Inspection Unit in 2008

Report symbol	Name of report	Total recommendations	Total relevant recommendations	Recommendation directed at the Executive Board
JIU/REP/2008/1	Review of management and administration in the Universal Postal Union	12	0	0
JIU/REP/2008/2	Junior Professional Officer/Associate Expert/Associate Professional Officer programmes in the United Nations system organizations.	9	4	0
JIU/REP/2008/3	Management review of environmental governance within the United Nations system	12	2	0
JIU/REP/2008/4	National execution of technical cooperation projects	11	5	2
JIU/REP/2008/5	Review of information and communication technology hosting services in the United Nations system organizations	6	5	1
JIU/REP/2008/6	Review of management of internet websites in the United Nations system organizations	8	7	2
Total	Summary of Joint Inspection Unit recommendations in 2008	58	23	5

Annex 2: Review of relevant Joint Inspection Unit recommendations in 2008 for consideration by the Executive Board

Recommendations	Remarks
JIU/REP/2008/5: Review of information and communication technology hosting services in the United Nations system organization	
Recommendation 6: The governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should request the executive heads to report to their next session on the implementation of the recommendations contained in this report, in particular those recommendations aimed at defining common methodology for information and communication technology costs/expenditures and exploring hosting solutions to take advantage of economies of scale.	Management responses to JIU recommendations are as discussed in the paper presented here.
JIU/REP/2008/4: National execution of technical cooperation projects	
Recommendation 4: The General Assembly and legislative bodies of corresponding organizations should reiterate that the donors provide less conditioned extra budgetary contributions, including those financing national execution, with a view to realizing the priorities of the recipient countries; and ensuring more flexibility, predictability and geographic balance in national execution expenditures.	UNDP agrees with the recommendations that less conditional contributions are desirable.
Recommendation 6: The General Assembly, in the context of its triennial comprehensive policy review to be held at its 65th session, and legislative bodies of corresponding organizations should assist recipient governments in strengthening their capacity in accounting and audit areas, through focused training, as required, to enable them to match international standards.	UNDP will, in the context of institutional development, coordinate resource mobilization to support national capacity development in the areas o procurement, financial management, and operational management based on national demand, and in line with the triennial comprehensive policy review.
JIU/REP/2008/6: Review of management of internet websites in the United Nations system organizations	
Recommendation 6: (a) The governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should establish an ad hoc committee dealing with the implementation of multilingualism on their corporate websites; (b) The governing bodies shall review the report submitted by the ad hoc committee on the measures and financial implications to achieve language parity on their websites and take appropriate action.	UNDP has already a multilingual policy for its corporate website and all online publication of a prescriptive content in the three languages (English, Spanish and French). In addition, the websites of UNDP country offices are to be in either English or French and in the local languag
Recommendation 8: The governing bodies of United Nations system organizations should request the executive heads to report to their next session on the implementation of the recommendations contained in this report addressed to the executive heads, in particular those aimed at reforming website governance, updating website strategy and policy, and implementing multilingualism.	Management responses to JIU recommendations are as discussed in the paper presented here

Annex 3: Implementation status of relevant Joint Inspection Unit recommendations issued in 2007

Report	Name of report	Total recommendations	Total relevant recommendations [1]	Implemented or ongoing	Partially implemented
2007/1	Voluntary contributions in United Nations system organizations. Impact on programme delivery and resource mobilization strategies.	7	6	4	2
2007/2	United Nations system staff medical coverage.	5	4	0	4
2007/4	Age structure of human resources in the organizations of the United Nations system.	8	6	3	3
2007/6	Knowledge management in the United Nations system.	5	3	3	0
2007/10	Liaison offices in the United Nations system.	8	8	7	1
2007/12	Review of the progress made by the United Nations system organizations in achieving Millennium Development Goal 6, Target 7, to combat HIV/AIDS.	11	8	6	2
	Total relevant recommendations in 2007	44	35	23	12

JIU reports issued in 2007 but not relevant to UNDP

JIU/REP/2007/3: Review of the Working Capital Fund in the World Meteorological Organization

JIU/REP/2007/5: Review of management and administration in the International Civil Aviation Organization

JIU/REP/2007/7: Review of management and administration in the International Maritime Organization

JIU/REP/2007/8: Funding and staffing of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

JIU/REP/2007/9: Review of the national competitive recruitment examination as a recruitment tool

JIU/REP/2007/11: Review of the management and administration of the World Meteorological Organization

[1] Relevant recommendations are those that are directed to UNDP and/or of specific relevance in the context of UNDP.

Annex 4: Implementation status of Joint Inspection Unit recommendations issued in 2006

Report	Name of report	Total recommendations	Total relevant recommendations	Implemented or ongoing	Partially implemented
2006/2	Oversight lacunae in the United Nations system.	17	10	10	0
2006/4	A second review of implementation of headquarters agreements concluded by United Nations system organizations: provision of headquarters premises and other facilities by host countries.	10	7	5	2
	Total relevant recommendations in 2006	27	17	15	2

JIU reports issued in 2006 but not relevant to UNDP

JIU/REP/2006/1: Evaluation of results-based budgeting in peacekeeping operations.

JIU/REP/2006/3: Follow-up to the management review of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

JIU/REP/2006/5: Towards a United Nations Humanitarian Assistance programme for disaster response and reduction.

JIU/REP/2006/6: Results-based management in the United Nations in the context of the reform process.

JIU/REP/2006/7: Staff mobility in the United Nations.